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The Market Project in Uganda¹²¹

The Market Project NGO creates market-driven local businesses that offer stable, safe jobs for men and women victims of trauma, exploitation and human trafficking. In Uganda, The Market Project's business, Nguvu Dairy, operates in a region that suffered two decades of civil war. Most of its 90 employees sell yogurt and are paid a decent commission for each packet sold. Other roles include production workers, those sourcing raw materials, finance and sales team leaders. Most of Nguvu's employees have not completed secondary education and many were denied schooling past primary level. More than two-thirds have endured two or more significant traumas: physical or sexual abuse, exposure to war, abduction and chronic poverty.

Experienced Market Project business advisors mentor local managers in sound management practices to ensure business viability. However, operating a business that employs trauma victims also requires managers to exercise extra sensitivity and care. To that end, managers are trained in trauma-informed management approaches and coached as they apply those principles in the workplace.

For those who experienced trauma, building trust is a challenge and requires time. At Nguvu, the ongoing effects of trauma can negatively impact workers' job performance in areas such as relations with teammates and interactions with customers. Many victims find they are challenged in the workplace by their own behaviors, such as misplaced shame when dealing with potential buyers or erupting in anger when customers criticize the product. Apart from on-the-job vocational training, each employee is trained in understanding the impact of trauma, and how to lessen the impact in their own lives and in the workplace. Employees also have the opportunity to participate in a trauma healing group.

As a result, victims find hope and flourish through stable jobs, increased agency, and long-term trauma healing. Community well-being is also improved. As manager Doreen observed: "The trauma training is bringing back together the different pieces that have been broken, to heal and really be respected ... Before, most people were not friendly to each other. (...) They were haunted by their past. When we brought in the [trauma] training, their lives started changing. They forgave. They started working in a group. (...) [It] has really changed their lives. They are supporting their families. They are supporting their communities. Those who were not on good terms with their partners, they have gone back and reconciled."



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121 The Market Project, see: <https://marketproject.org/about/>.

122 Photos provided by The Market Project, available at: <https://marketproject.org/about/>.